

THE

# HISTORIAN

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OF HANCOCK COUNTY

Bay Saint Louis, Mississippi

August 2008

## COMING EVENTS AT LOBRANO HOUSE

The August luncheon meeting will be held on Thursday, August 21, 2008, at noon at the Kate Lobrano House. The speakers will be President Cheryl Grace and Treasurer John Anderson of the Bay Saint Louis Little Theater. They will discuss the restoration of the theater's new home, the building's history, and future projects of the group. *Reservations are required* and may be made by calling 467-4090. Please call *by noon on Wednesday, August 20*, to assure your reservation and to help us plan seating which is limited to forty-five people. The price of the lunch is \$8.00.



The Scafidi House  
Used as the Starr Boarding House in  
*This Property Is Condemned*

## President's Message

As we near the third anniversary of the storm I will not name, I find myself again being so thankful that our Historical Society suffered comparatively little damage. The large collections of photographs and other records have been of invaluable assistance and comfort to countless Hancock County residents trying to put their lives back together as well allowing them to reflect upon how this area has successfully rebounded from previous catastrophes.

We're still looking for addi-

## When Hollywood Came To Town

By  
Eddie Coleman

In the late summer of 1965, Bay Saint Louis was alive with rumors of forthcoming Hollywood activity in town. A movie was to be filmed on location in the small city! It was later learned that the Scafidi house would be used for exterior shots of the fictional Starr Boarding House. In addition, the area now known as Depot Row as well as the Depot District in-

cluding the train depot were being used to represent the fictional town of Dodson, MS. Locals were also to be used as extras in the movie.

In the years since the movie was filmed here, the Scafidi house has fallen into disrepair, the train depot has been restored, and Depot Row has been revitalized.

After Hurricane Katrina the owner of the house wanted it truly condemned and torn down as an eyesore. However, through hard work, determination, and devotion, the Bay Saint Louis Little Theater was able to purchase the property and is now in the process of renovating it to become the new home of the performing group. Who better to give the

(Continued on p. 6)

THE

**HISTORIAN**

OF HANCOCK COUNTY

Eddie Coleman, Editor  
Linda-Lou Nelson, PublisherPublished monthly by the  
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108 Cue Street

Telephone/Fax [228] 467-4090

**Email address:**[hancockcountyhis@bellsouth.net](mailto:hancockcountyhis@bellsouth.net)**Website:**[www.hancockcountyhistoricalsociety.com](http://www.hancockcountyhistoricalsociety.com)  
Marianne Plum, Webmaster**LOBRANO HOUSE  
HOURS**MONDAY — FRIDAY  
10:00AM — 3:00PM  
Closed: 12:00—1:00 (lunch)**MISSION STATEMENT**

"TO PRESERVE THE GENERAL AND ARCHITECTURAL HISTORY OF HANCOCK COUNTY AND TO PRESERVE THE KATE LOBRANO HOUSE AND COLLECTIONS THEREIN; TO RESEARCH AND INTERPRET LIFE IN HANCOCK COUNTY; AND TO ENCOURAGE AN APPRECIATION OF AND INTEREST IN HISTORICAL PRESERVATION."

building new life? The house resonates with the "ghosts" of famous actors such as Natalie Wood and Robert Redford who starred in the movie *This Property Is Condemned* which was partially filmed here.

The movie was based on a one-act play by Mississippi playwright Tennessee Williams. Francis Ford Coppola, who wrote the screenplay, took Williams' story, used it as the framework for the movie plot, and filled in the details which included the Natalie Wood character, Alva, who is not a character in Williams' work, but is only referred to by Alva's younger sister Willie.

The real draw for residents of the Bay was that *genuine* Hollywood actors would be in town. People didn't know early on who the stars would be, but they later learned that Natalie Wood, a gorgeous Hollywood beauty with movie credits extending back to her childhood, would be the star. Others mentioned were lesser known at the time: someone named Robert Redford, another actor named Charles Bronson, one Dabney

Coleman, Kate Reid, Mary Badham (who had played Scout in *To Kill a Mockingbird*), and Jon Provost (TV's "Timmy" from "Lassie.") At the time few people outside of Hollywood had heard of the up-and-coming Sydney Pollack, who was to direct the movie.

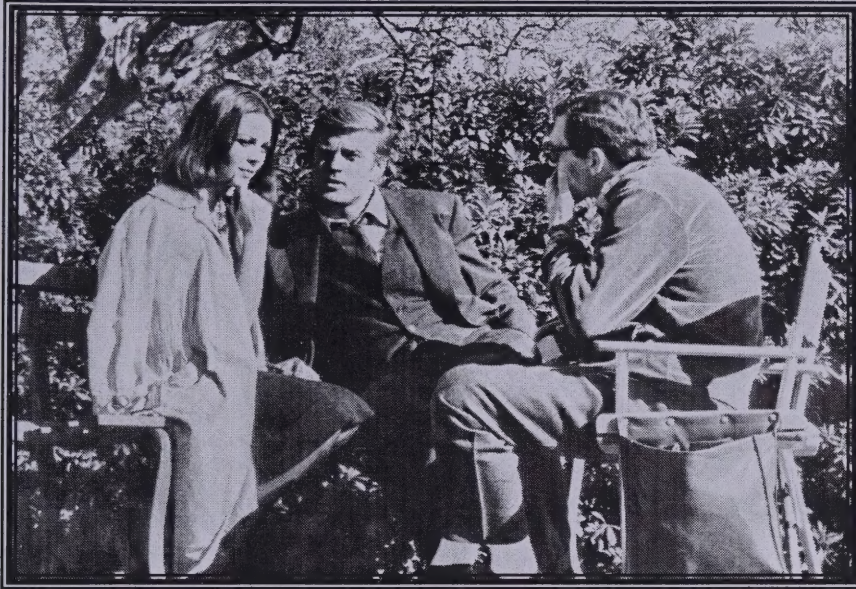
Bay Saint Louis was chosen because the area of town to be used was easily convertible into the Depression Era fictitious Dodson. The proximity of the depot and the Scafidi house fit well into the script and were quite workable. It also *seemed* that the location was remote enough not to interfere with daily business in town and far enough removed so that the town's daily business would not disrupt filming.

However, such was not the case. In an article for the now defunct *Coast* magazine, local resident Lisa Monti related an incident which occurred one afternoon. It seems that just as the movie's opening scene was ready to be filmed, the St. Stanislaus Band began practice at the football field nearby. Not to be outdone, Mr. Pollock invited the band members to join other spectators and gave them a front row observation point from which to see the filming.

Ms. Monti also revealed in her article that rumors of the actresses' "diva attitudes" proved to be true, but not in the way one might think. It was not Natalie Wood who displayed such behavior; it was Mary Badham who pitched a hissy fit when her script was temporarily mislaid and she claimed someone had "stolen" it.

Not everyone in town seemed to be so enamored with the "movie folks" as were some. Publisher of *The Sea Coast Echo* Powell Glass wrote an editorial against the closing of a street for the filming. He also expressed a fear that the content of the story would re-





Director Sydney Pollack discusses a scene from  
*This Property Is Condemned*  
with stars Natalie Wood and Robert Redford.  
Photo Courtesy of HCHS member Hugh Stephenson

flect poorly on the city. Others in town believed the mere fact that the original play had been written by Tennessee Williams was enough to cause alarm.

It is interesting to note that Tennessee Williams was so disturbed by the movie which came

from his original play that he threatened to have his name removed from the film's credits. It is also noteworthy that Natalie Wood received a Golden Globe nomination as Best Actress for *This Property Is Condemned*.

Nonetheless the filming of a major motion picture in Bay Saint Louis delivered a boost to the economy, provided daily entertainment, and gave citizens many memories to relate to children and grandchildren.  
SOURCES:

McCarthy, Frank. "Theatrical Poster for *This Property Is Condemned*." 6 August 2008, 27 July 2008 <[http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/This\\_Property\\_Is\\_Condemned](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/This_Property_Is_Condemned)>.

Monti, Lisa. "Remembering *This Property Is Condemned*." *Coast Magazine*, July/August 1996, 39-46.

Webre, Gil. "For Hollywood—Bay St. Louis Goes Back 30 Years." *Dixie Magazine* supplement to *The Times-Picayune*, Nov. 28, 1965, 10-12.

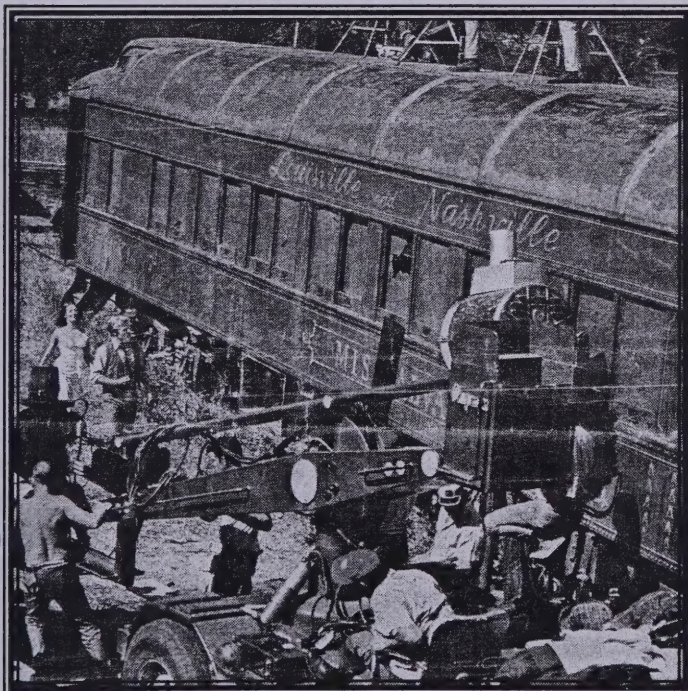


## The First Presbyterian Church Bay St. Louis

By  
Scott Bagley

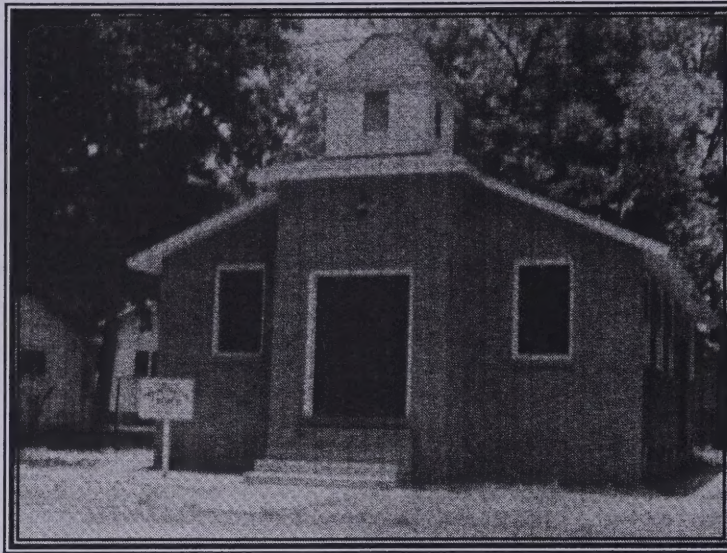
This is the sixth in a series of articles on historical churches of Hancock County. This month we take a look at the First Presbyterian Church at Bay St. Louis. With a shorter history than other churches in the area, this church nonetheless has a rich and interesting heritage.

It was not until 1949 that the idea of a Presbyterian church in Bay St. Louis was conceived. Members of this faith had a choice: either worship in churches of other denominations or travel to nearby churches across the Bay for Sunday services. Sensing the need for a local church, Mrs. Fred Koeniger and her daughter Sybil, along with Misses Hilda and Barbara Sick, be-



Filming the  
movie  
*This Property Is Condemned*  
in  
Bay Saint Louis  
in 1965

Bay Saint  
Louis  
Presbyterian  
Church  
at its  
original  
location at  
138  
(now 140) de  
Montluzin  
Ave.  
Bay Saint  
Louis, MS



gan discussing just such a possibility. Soon thereafter, on November 21, 1949, the Reverend J. N. Brown of the First Presbyterian Church in Gulfport was contacted, and he agreed to meet with Presbyterians in Bay St. Louis.

The meeting, occurring on December 13 of the same year, took place in the home of Mrs. Koeniger. At this meeting plans were formulated to have church services regularly on the second and fourth Sundays of each month at Mrs. Koeniger's home. Those attending this first meeting, and thus forming the core of the church, were Miss Barbara Sick, Miss Hilda Sick, Mr. and Mrs. Christian Reab, Mr. and Mrs. Camille Shaefer, Mr. and Mrs. Fred Koeniger, Kathleen Shaefer, Richard Shaefer, and Miss Sybil Koeniger.

On Sunday, January 8, 1950, the first service was held with the above mentioned Reverend Brown officiating and with the original eleven members in attendance. As related in a subsequent unpublished history of the church, "There was no organ, no piano, no pulpit to enhance this first worship in the spacious living room of the Koeniger home. But there was little need of these exterior trappings because in the heart of each one present there was a peace in the

knowledge that God's Will had been fulfilled. His children had been brought together in prayer and love."

Over the next year services were held regularly at four o'clock in the afternoon on the second and fourth Sundays. Officiating at most of these services was the Reverend L. A. Beckman, Jr., who drove down from Ellisville. Within this first year, attendance at these services increased to fifty persons and a Bible, pulpit, piano, and communion service were acquired.

In May of 1953 a renovated Army barracks building was purchased by the newly formed church. This building, located at 138 de Montluzin Avenue (later 140), was purchased from Mrs. Gladys Bartlett Jones, who had used the building as a workshop named the "Blue Bottle Art Studio." Of the \$4500 purchase price, a sum of five hundred dollars was paid by the church members and the balance loaned by the Home Mission Board of the Meridian Presbytery, Synod of Mississippi.

The first regular, if not full-time pastor of the church, was the Reverend Edward Morren. During his pastorate, services continued to be held only on alternate Sundays

as the Reverend Morren also served Poplarville and McNeil Presbyterian churches. In April 1956, however, services began being held every Sunday with Reverend Morren preaching on the first, third, and fifth Sundays, the pulpit being filled on the second and fourth Sundays by elders from the Gulfport church, such as Mr. Harold Barber and Mr. D. A. McCandliss.

### BOOKS FOR SALE AT LOBRANO HOUSE

*Bay Saint Louis: Celebrating the First 300 Years*  
By the HCHS (\$15.00)

A nostalgic keepsake of the city's history including descriptions and pictures of many of the historic buildings and houses especially those along Beach Boulevard prior to Katrina

*Heritage Cookbook*

By the HCHS (\$15.00)

A collection of our members' favorite family recipes

*Holly*

By Paul La Violette (\$20.00)

An intriguing anthology of tales of a tomcat living in a beach house on the Gulf Coast

*Katrina Cookbook*

By Charlet Russell (\$19.95)

A collection of recipes by Bayou Tours

*Mississippi's No-Man's Land*

By Marco Giardino, Ph.D., and Russell Guerin (\$10.95)

The story of the Koch family, early settlers of Hancock County, and their experiences during the Civil War, based on their letters

*One Dog, Two Dogs, Three Dogs, Four...*

By Paul La Violette (\$20.00)

Twice told tales of several dogs living in a beach house on the Gulf Coast

*Sink or Be Sunk*

By Paul La Violette (\$30.00)

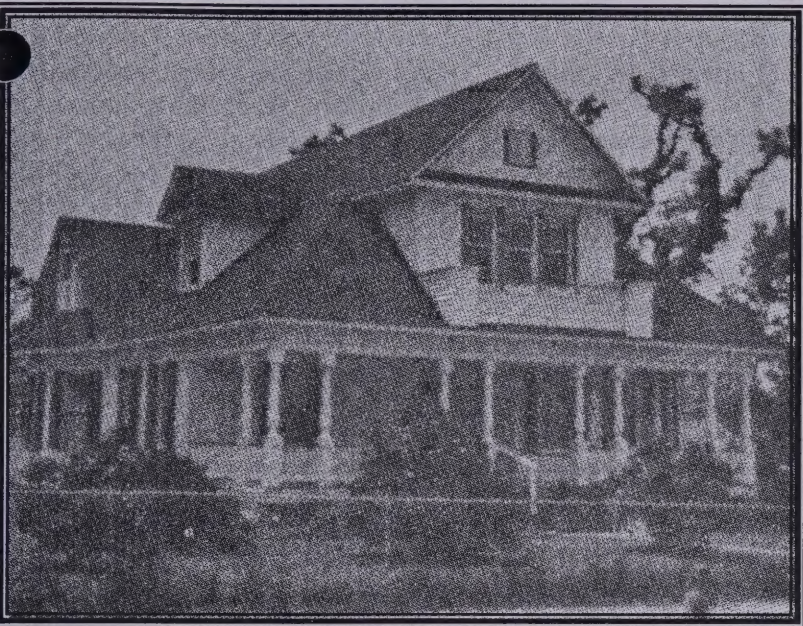
A recounting of the naval battle in the Mississippi Sound preceding the Battle of New Orleans in 1812

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First  
Presbyterian  
Church manse on  
Ulman Ave.  
(sold by the  
church in 1984)  
Bay Saint Louis,  
MS

The church continued to grow during the mid-1950s not only spiritually but financially with sufficient funds being saved for further renovation. Exterior changes by way of siding, a brick-veneered front and the addition of a steeple helped to convert what was once an art studio into what can only be described as a quaint small church building. The interior was also refurbished by painting and sanding and with the addition of air conditioning and stained glass windows. Hand-hewed pews had been loaned to the church from a church in Ocean Springs until such time as the Bay St. Louis church reached another expansion program and added seating capacity. The pews would then be passed on to some other young and developing congregation or be returned to Ocean Springs. (The final pew would be returned to Ocean Springs in 1981.)

On March 31, 1957, this small church on deMontluzin reached its full stature and was reorganized as the First Presbyterian Church of Bay St. Louis. At the time of the reorganization, the Reverend Morren was still the pastor, and the ruling elders

of the church were H.B. Barber, a lawyer, D.A. McCandliss, an agricultural and nursery operator, Paul L. Wright, Jr., an accountant, and W. L. Rigby, Superintendent of the Gulfport City Schools.

The next few years saw continued improvements and changes in the growth and structure of the church. Membership increased and a new and larger pulpit was installed in the sanctuary. On November 1, 1959, the Reverend Dr. Edward A. Lindsey began his pastorate at the church. A native Mississippian, Dr. Lindsey was reared on the Gulf Coast in Pass Christian.

In early 1960 the congregation approved the purchase of the so-called "Drake property" on Ulman Avenue for \$20,000. This property provided not only a manse but also space for a new and larger church. The location, being about twenty-five feet above sea level one-half block from the Gulf, is one of the highest sites in Bay St. Louis. Renovation of the manse began immediately allowing Dr. Lindsey and his wife to move in soon thereafter.

During the early 1960s a

stained glass cathedral window was added behind the altar as were a communion table, a Celtic cross, and two polished brass vases. All of this was dedicated to the memory of church member Anne McCutchon, wife of W. P. McCutchon.

In early 1961 the congregation approved the sale of the church building on deMontluzin. The property was sold contingent upon the congregation's being permitted to meet in the old church until such time as a new sanctuary could be completed sufficiently to be occupied. Thereafter a building committee was formed for the construction of a new church on Ulman. During the subsequent construction it was determined that the building could not be entirely completed with the funds on hand, so the decision was made to have the contractors finish the sanctuary and the men of the church finish the interior of the Sunday school rooms and pastor's study.

On Sunday, April 15, 1962, the new church building on Ulman was dedicated. The church was filled with many of the townspeople of all faiths being present for the dedication.

On August 15, 1969, a concrete slab foundation for an expansion to the church's fellowship hall and additional classrooms was poured. Two days later, however, Hurricane Camille struck the Mississippi Gulf Coast. The devastation was massive, but the church fared reasonably well. Damage to the structure itself included a window which had to be replaced, a small puncture in another window in the front of the church, and the loss of a large number of shingles from the roof. The Sunday after the storm, church was held as usual with a large crowd. Most of the attendees were wearing cutoffs and/or rags covered with mud. Work on the church's ad-

dition continued about six months later and was dedicated on June 7, 1970. Three months later Mrs. Lynn Church received permission to begin a kindergarten at the church. The school served a real need in the community for the next sixteen years.

In early 1972, the church purchased, for additional parking space, the old service station building immediately east of the existing church building. The purchase price was \$4,500. A new parking lot was not officially dedicated until August 10, 1986, in memory of Bessie Ingram Mouser, wife of former pastor, Dwyn Mouser.

At a meeting on August 12, 1984, the congregation voted to sell the manse on Ulman Avenue for \$90,000. At this same meeting the church voted to change to a unicameral government having only a Board of Elders.

In September of 1987, the church decided, with much regret, to discontinue kindergarten classes. The church expressed thanks and sincere appreciation to the late Howard Haines and his widow, Susan, for their devotion in contributing funds,

leadership, and interest in these classes.

In the early 1990's members began a rather significant renovation. The room behind the sanctuary was made into a choir room, the nursery was completely remodeled, and the adult Sunday School classroom was given a "new look" as were the kitchen and fellowship hall.

The First Presbyterian Church celebrated its 40th anniversary in the spring of 1997. At the celebration the vision and hard work of the founders were recognized.

Hurricane Katrina struck in August of 2005 bringing unprecedented destruction to the Gulf Coast. Because of its high location, damage to the church was relatively minor allowing the location to serve almost immediately as a home for countless relief workers coming to the Coast to help. Their help and support, including help to other churches in the area, are beyond value.

In spite of its relatively short history in Hancock County, the First Presbyterian Church has a rich heritage of providing spiritual comfort and valuable community participa-

tion. Under the current pastorate of Rob Butler, the church continues to serve the needs of its members and its community. If the past of this church is any precursor, the future looks very bright.

#### SOURCES:

Ling, Edgar Roger, Sr. *The History of the First Presbyterian Church of Bay St. Louis, Mississippi*, 1992, Dolphin Press, Inc. (used with permission of the church)

Barrett, Jean S. *40th Anniversary First Presbyterian Church, Bay St. Louis, Mississippi* April, 1997

The author wishes to thank Mary Seiley and Rob Butler for their help with this article.

Please volunteer to help with the Annual Halloween Tour. We need workers to set up the cemetery, guides, actors, and donations of treats for the guests at the house.

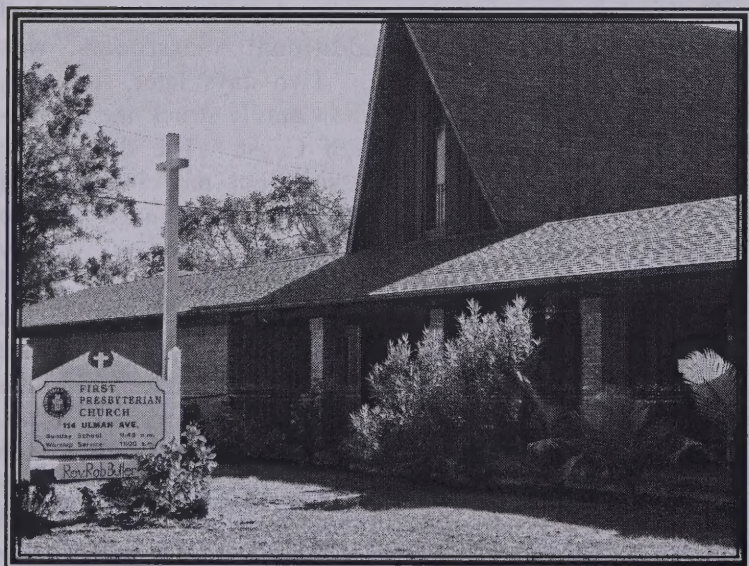
President's Message  
(Continued from p. 1)

tional plants for our newly landscaped yard. Thanks to members who've already made a contribution.

Don't forget the fast approaching Halloween Cemetery Tour. We need your help and participation. Join the fun.

Scott Bagley

Roland Schexnayder  
July 6, 2008



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Presbyterian  
Church at its  
present location  
at  
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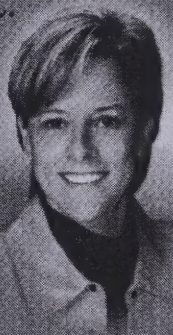
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BAY TOWN INN SURVIVAL  
CELEBRATION  
August 30, 2008

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*Southern Cultures*

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for the UNC Center for the study of  
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Sunday, September 28, 2008—*Breakfast with Les & Bess*  
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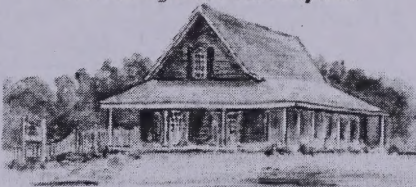
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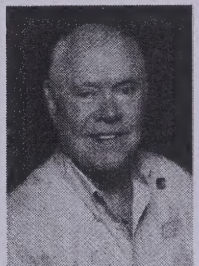
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